

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE BELIEFS OF
JAPANESE LEARNERS AND TEACHERS
ABOUT LEARNING ENGLISH
AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate Japanese learners' and teachers' beliefs about learning English and to explore related issues that are likely to impinge on the process of the learning of a language. The research was carried out using an interpretive paradigm and involved five multiple case studies to investigate the beliefs of five groups of Japanese language learners and teachers. The different groups were made up from seventeen secondary school students and twenty two university students located in Japan; four students studying in the UK; seven secondary school teachers of English who were also studying in the UK; and three university professors of English who taught in Japan. Data were collected from participants using open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The content analysis was based around six pre-determined themes and four emerging themes.

The findings revealed that certain beliefs, for example, optimistic beliefs and the commitment to a preferred model of learning English can negatively or positively impinge on the way individuals learn in different situations. The study also suggests that language learners need to have positive attitudes towards learning a language, but that each individual is motivated differently. Whether learners regard English as a subject at school or as a means of communication is likely to make a big difference to learners' motivation to learn English. The role of aesthetic completeness in traditional Japanese arts might also negatively influence the attitudes of Japanese learners of English, in that their aspiration for precision can easily outrun their real linguistic ability, and in so doing make it more difficult for them to achieve proficiency in the use of language. With respect to teaching English, the study indicated the importance of understanding

students' beliefs in the educational context. It was also revealed that teachers' beliefs have a great influence on learners' progress or motivation for learning.

The implications of this study suggest that, as well as the consideration of individual differences, in the process of learning close attention should also be given to the psychological aspects that impinge on acquiring English in the context of Japanese culture.

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